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Papers on the Chinese Community



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PAPERS ON THE CHINESE COMMUNITY

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Report on
THE CHINESE INTERCULTURAL SEMINAR
held at WoodGreen Community Centre

January 29, 1974

This seminar was the third in a series sponsored by the Citizenship Bureau of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (now the Multicultural Development Branch of the Ministry of Culture and Recreation). The main purpose of the series is to make it possible for professionals to become better acquainted with the cultures of specific ethnic groups in order to be more effective in working with clients of a different cultural background. Another very important result of these seminars has been invitations from schools and other organizations for resource persons from ethnic groups to meet with staffs for consultation on matters regarding more effective service to specific ethnic groups comprising the agency's clientele.

Program

The morning program consisted of four short addresses followed by discussion groups. These were:

An Overview of the Chinese Community
Chinese Family Life
Education
Employment

After a Chinese lunch there was another address on Chinese Community Organization.

Participants returned to their discussion groups, after which there was a plenary session.

Content

The content of the addresses and the group discussions is summarized briefly below.

An Overview of the Chinese Community

The first two large waves of Chinese immigration to Canada were in 1858 when they came from California to work in the gold mines of British Columbia and between 1882 and 1885 when over 17,000 were brought in under contract to help build the Canadian Pacific Railway. The work was hard and brutal with considerable loss of life. With the completion of the railway a great number of men were unemployed. Organized labour looked upon the Chinese as enemies fearing they would flood the labour market and depress the labour market by working for low wages. In 1894 the British Columbia Government disqualified Chinese from voting. The Canadian Government restricted immigration by imposing a head tax on Chinese immigrants which rose from fifty dollars in 1885 to five hundred in 1903. In 1907 rioters damaged all Chinese stores in the Chinese section of Vancouver and terrorized the Chinese community. In 1923 the Canadian Government passed the Chinese Immigration Act which remained in force until 1947. Under this act the number of Chinese male immigrants was severely restricted to a small number in specific occupational groups. They were not allowed to bring their families from China. As a result families were separated and there are many lonely, elderly Chinese men in Canada. When the Chinese Immigration Act was repealed, Chinese regained the right to vote. By 1967 new regulations of the Immigration Act gave immigrants from all countries the right to enter on the same basis.

Because of severe discrimination in employment Chinese set up their own small businesses in the cities. These were usually laundries or restaurants. During the years many discriminating obstacles have been removed and they have moved into other occupations.

The Chinese community in Toronto was first located in the Sherbourne-Queen area. It moved over to York and Queen and by the late 1940's and the 1950's businesses and residences were concentrated in the Queen-Elizabeth-Dundas area. Then the building of the new Civic Centre around the new City Hall forced them to move. There is now a large concentration in a second area in the Don Vale-Broadview-Pape area. Many Chinese shops and restaurants have been opening recently along Spadina Avenue from College Street to Queen Street.

Family Life

Chinese have long been accustomed to the extended family with three or four generations living under one roof. Elders were held in high respect and their advice was greatly valued. The eldest male member was the head of the household. The status of the female was limited to being a good wife and mother.

In Canada, Chinese young people adopt Canadian patterns and live according to western norms. The Canadian born think of themselves as Canadian rather than Chinese. They maintain Chinese values to a greater or lesser extent but are more independent than in the old country. Children are less affectionate and obedient to their elders. The elders suffer a loss of status. They are shocked, frustrated and disappointed. They feel ignored unwanted and useless. The middle generation is caught between the children and the elders.

The new language is harder for the Chinese parents to learn than it is for the children. The language barrier widens the generation gap. Children attending school eventually use English as their working language and retain only an elementary knowledge of Chinese. Parents know only a minimum of English so there is not a common language.

Arranged marriages are becoming quite uncommon, both in China and here, although young people are likely to ask elders for opinions. Inter-marriage with other races is not looked on favourably.

Newly married young Chinese in Canada plan on small families and may prefer to live separately from inlaws. Older people are hurt by this but are coming to accept it. The Chinese community is building a home for the aged and many elders are showing an interest in it.

Many mothers in Toronto are now out working, sharing responsibility with their husbands.

Young people now emigrating directly from the mainland have been accustomed to having plans made for them by the state and may find it difficult to get along in a competitive society.

Older and middle-aged Chinese tend to associate with other Chinese for their social activities. Older people are pleased to engage in entertainment and educational activities which enable them to meet others. Middle-aged Chinese, when they can find time outside of their work and have no responsibilities, may dine out, go to movies or play mah-jongg. Young people can enjoy the same kind of recreational activities as other young Canadians.

Chinese do not like apartment living because children make noise, quarrel and disturb other tenants. As a result rents get raised. Families will work hard and live frugally in order to get a small house. They accept Ontario Housing Corporation homes only as a last resort. They have heard that children in public housing projects are poorly behaved and do not want their children to fall into the same bad habits.

Chinese do not look for outside help in solving problems. An old Chinese proverb states "Everyone should sweep his own snow from his own doorstep." Consequently they have been very slow to complain outwardly about exploitation or discrimination or to organize to combat it. They do not talk openly about conflicts and problems to outside agencies which might offer help. These are considered to be of concern only to the immediate family. This often results in extreme hardship for families meeting new types of problems in a strange country.

Education

Qualifications of teachers in Hong Kong are not standardized as they are in Ontario. There are three kinds of schools: government schools, government subsidized schools which are mostly church sponsored, and private schools many of which are run for profit. Generally speaking, the first two types of schools have the best qualified teachers, while standards in private schools vary greatly.

Elementary education takes six years and secondary education five (Forms I to V). If a student intends to go to university, he takes two streams. In the Anglo-Chinese stream English is used as the medium of instruction while Chinese remains an important subject. In the Vernacular stream Chinese is the medium of instruction and English is a very important subject.

Most parents send their children to the two-year kindergartens which are privately run, in order to help them get through a Grade One examination into a good school. In the government schools education is free but not compulsory. At the end of the sixth grade, there is an examination. The more successful students go into the government or government-subsidized secondary schools. The others have to find their way into private schools, through competitive examinations. At the end of Form V, the government gives a school-leaving examination. The majority will pass but only the most successful ones can get into the matriculation courses and later sit for the University Entrance Examination. There is a great deal of pressure on children to achieve and opportunities obviously go to the better endowed and more privileged children.

Chinese children usually like school here. They are relieved of the fierce competition. The classroom is doubtless confusing at first, with its open spaces, physical activities, free classroom discussion and informal discipline. Chinese parents expect children to have much homework and there is a strong emphasis on mathematics and science. Social sciences, music and art are considered of secondary importance. Physical education and extracurricular activities are regarded as play, not part of the educational process.

Children are expected to be honest, conscientious, obedient and respectful. Responsibility is emphasized more than rights. Quietness is accepted, if not encouraged. The Canadian school expects children to be responsive and involved, to make friends and be able to participate in a group. The quiet Chinese child may be overlooked. When Chinese children become a matter of concern to teachers it is either because they are withdrawn or not making progress in English.

A withdrawn child, if discovered early, can be helped, by placing him with a compatible teacher, giving him small group experience and building up his confidence. High School students are likely to have more difficulty. If they are reasonably bright and had a fair educational opportunity in Hong Kong they can adapt. Those who have had lesser opportunities may have the ambition but not the academic foundation. Sometimes they will not accept the program or grade placement recommended by the school. They insist on aiming high and fail at the end.

Parents appreciate an opportunity to talk with teachers about their children's progress, once they realize this is part of the Canadian pattern. Teachers can help them to see the difference in goals and expectations. They can also attempt to assure them that play and fun are good for children.

Teachers received little or no help in their professional training to prepare them to work effectively with immigrant groups. Careful screening of teachers for schools with large concentrations of immigrant children is most important. Individual schools can carry out in-service training themselves.

Organization in the Chinese Community

Chinese have traditionally held a deep respect for authority. It has not been their custom, in the past, to question the action of government, even when they were unjustly treated. Associations to change political attitudes, for a long time did not exist. There were, however, tongs, family and village associations, formed for socializing.

Because of the hardships Chinese benevolent associations sprang up. These began to engage in political activity. They petitioned Ottawa for more relaxed standards in immigration laws, and eventually, for equal standards.

The Chinese community is not united. Although many people come from Hong Kong, there are also Chinese from Taiwan and others who have come from the mainland, through Hong Kong. Cantonese is the most common language among the Chinese in Canada, but Taiwanese speak Mandarin, and there are also a number of dialects. There is one common written language. Some immigrant groups are united through membership through their church. Chinese do not have this binder. There are no structured religions, bringing people together regularly in religious observations and practice. Instead, there are a number of different philosophies.

Nevertheless, new associations are now forming. The younger people are better educated, and being in a better economic position, have more time to devote to their communities. The new associations are pushing for human rights, equal opportunities and better social services in the area of housing, health and welfare.

The Chinese community is becoming more open to Canadian society. While the process has its good aspects, it threatens their culture. Chinese are seeking funding to aid in the maintenance of their culture. Parent associations are actively seeking changes within the system, and have asked for classes in the schools to teach the Chinese language and culture. The Mong Sheong Foundation is building a home for Chinese senior citizens with government and private funds.

Attendance

One hundred and fifty-four persons attended the seminar. The organizations represented are listed below:

Department of Manpower and Immigration	5
Department of the Secretary of State	3
Unemployment Insurance Commission	2
Ontario Citizenship Bureau	13
Ontario Human Rights Commission	2
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education	2
Ontario Ministry of Corrections	2
Ontario Workmen's Compensation Board	3
Ontario Senior Citizens Bureau	1
Ontario Ministry of Labour	1
Ontario Housing Corporation	2
Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services - Regional Office	2
Ryerson Polytechnical Institute	1
Toronto City Hall - Mental Health Division	2
Accounting	1
Toronto Public Health Department	2
Toronto Planning Board	1
Toronto Board of Education - Student Services	7
Principals and Teachers	18
Toronto Separate School Board	2
Teacher, English Language	1
York Board of Education	2
Metro Toronto Police	4
University of Toronto - Faculty of Social Work	2
Faculty of Education	1
Social Work Students	4
Mental Retardation Centre	5
Queen St. Mental Health Centre	2
Broadview Community Health Centre	3
Victorian Order of Nurses	6
Hospitals - Toronto General	2
Wellesley	2
Riverdale	1
Addiction Research Foundation	2
Children's Aid Society of Metro Toronto	6

Catholic Children's Aid Society of Metro Toronto	1
Catholic Family Services	3
University Settlement	7
Interfaith Immigration Committee	2
Churches	3
Eastminster Community Services	2
Y. M. C. A.	2
Grange Community Storefront	2
Mon Sheong Foundation	1
Chinese Youth Conference	1
Cross Cultural Communications Centre	1
Riverdale Public Library	1
Operation Family Rights	1
Volunteer Centre of Metro Toronto	1
Hillcrest Group	1
Other Individuals	10

THE PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING
BY CHINESE IMMIGRANTS

Submitted by Ivy Chan

To: Professor Henderson

April 1976

Learning another language is always difficult because of the complexity of the task to be mastered. Just as it is difficult for Canadians to learn Chinese, so it is difficult for Chinese to learn English. For many Chinese immigrants in Canada, their difficulty is compounded by the fact that they have to learn under difficult circumstances - difficult because a high level of achievement is expected of them in a relatively short time; difficult because their achievement is often underrated by the fact that they are only trying to catch up with the native speakers; difficult again because they are taught by Canadians, many of whom cannot understand the peculiar problems that they, as Chinese speakers, will experience in trying to learn the English language; and lastly difficult because their learning material is often foreign to them as far as the cultural context is concerned. The stories, pictures, illustrations and examples that the teachers use are supposed to help the pupils proceed from the known to the unknown, but for the Chinese pupils many of the stories and pictures, etc., are just as meaningless. The classroom - such an exciting and stimulating environment for their Canadian classmates - is often a place of embarrassment and shame for them. Their inherent shyness, plus their conservative cultural background makes it difficult for them to participate in class, and this makes it even more difficult for their teachers to understand them. The resulting sense of

isolation and inferiority is disastrous for language learning.

It has been pointed out (Gardner, 1968) that motivation plays a very important part in the acquisition of a second language; that a truly successful student is motivated to become integrated with the other language community (as different from the instrumental orientation); and that this motive is derived from the attitudinal characteristics in the home and must be fostered by an accepting attitude by the parents concerning the other language group. If this is so, Chinese students are really handicapped. Though Chinese people traditionally respect, even admire the West, the message given in the home is very clearly this:

Learn from the West, but do not be like them.

You must always remember that you are Chinese.

While there is pressure from the home not to conform to the West, there is also tremendous pressure from the school and peer-group to conform. Torn apart by these two great forces, the Chinese student may well feel tormented. Not only this, but in school, in many subtle ways he is made to feel that his ethnic difference is a disadvantage, and the sooner he tries to shake it off the better for him. He soon comes to feel ashamed of his own culture and even of his parents! For a Chinese (as it must also be for other people) this is a terrible feeling because filial piety is preached from the cradle to the grave. Any child who does not respect, obey and revere his parents is ostracized.

Perhaps it is true to say that a Chinese student placed in a Canadian classroom is experiencing the greatest emotional conflict and faced with the saddest dilemma, but who can see it?

- * "...The Chinese children tend to be very reticent. They need a great deal of encouragement to express themselves. Some of this is due to a language problem, some is cultural."

so writes Mrs. L. W. Hamilton, a teacher in Ogden Public School Junior, to the Work Group on Multicultural Programs.

- * Responses from Ogden Staff members to D. Leckie, Trustee and Co-Chairman of the Work Group on Multicultural Programs: The Toronto Board of Education, Dec. 5, 1974

All of the high schools agreed that the Chinese students were polite, but more quiet and shy than the other students...some of the schools felt that these Chinese students are overly submissive to authority in that they regard the teacher as the authority and do not challenge him sufficiently...Moreover, some Chinese high school students are extremely concerned with their school work. They are very fearful of failure. Some students become quite worried if the teacher puts the slightest unfavourable remark on one of their reports...One principal observed that perhaps these students worked too hard, that they seemed to be under a great deal of pressure, and that he would like to see a minimization of these competitive urges and tensions.

(Chan, Hui. 1975 P.16)

It was suggested to the researcher that the teachers do not know much about Chinese culture because the Chinese do not stand out in class. That is, they are not a problem group. The Chinese do well academically; they are polite, soft-spoken.

(Chan, Hui 1975 P. 18)

Shy, obedient, hard - working, and a good student - these are the typical impressions teachers have of Chinese students. Courtesy and self-restraint have been part of their upbringing since birth, and if they have emotional conflicts and frustrations, instead of taking them out on the people around them, they will only become more shy and reticent. Unless they meet with a very concerned and sympathetic teacher, they will be overlooked in class. Whatever their problems, they must do well. Chinese children don't have to worry about helping with household chores or with the family income in general, but they **MUST** work hard at their studies, otherwise they will let their parents down. And if they **FAIL**, they will bring shame and disgrace to the family name, and their parents will feel ashamed to face their relatives and friends. In Hong Kong, where most of the Chinese immigrants in Toronto come from, suicides after the disclosure of the Hong Kong Schools Certificate Examination results are very common.

Can the parents help ?

On the whole, Chinese parents do not participate in school meetings. This reluctance seems to stem from the traditional cultural attitude of respect that recent immigrant parents have towards school and the educational system...the school knows its own business; they, the parents, have no place in giving advice to the school. In fact, the very act of visiting the teacher may be considered as questioning the authority of the teacher.

(Chan, Hui 1975 P. 11)

So in this paper I shall attempt to discuss the problems of language learning by Chinese immigrants under various headings:

1. The complexity of the task to be mastered
2. The absence of a sense of achievement
3. The encounter between the Canadian Teacher and the Chinese student in the classroom
4. How a Chinese student is received by his peer-group
5. Cultural differences and conflicts
6. Conflict in the home
7. The obsession to do well academically
8. Parent involvement in school
9. He does learn after all
10. Prejudice against the Chinese student

The complexity of the task to be mastered

An-Yan Tang Wang, a doctoral student at Indiana University and Richard Earle, an assistant professor of education and assistant director of ERIC/CRIER in the same University wrote a very interesting article in April, 1972 on the "Cultural constraints in teaching Chinese students to read English". In it they brought out some important points:

The Chinese language is ideographic rather than alphabetic. A Chinese student has to learn the shape, sound and meaning of thousands of Chinese characters to be able to read and write. Each character is neatly printed, equally sized and square. This is quite different from the English words that are irregular in length. Chinese people call the English words "chicken-bowels" and it is pointed out that this irregularity may cause a lot of strain on the eyes.

Chinese characters are traditionally written in vertical columns from top to bottom, and from right to left of the page, so a Chinese student may find it difficult to follow the English words that are written in horizontal lines from left to right.

As with most language learners, Chinese students find the intonation of the second language most difficult to master. They often appear to be singing rather than reading. For them, mastery of spoken English is essential to oral reading.

It has been pointed out that a relaxed atmosphere is conducive to language learning, but a Chinese student, having been brought up to regard learning as almost a sacred affair, and teachers as 'masters' does not know how to function in a classroom where informality reigns.

Oral practice is indispensable in language learning, and a language learner must participate actively in class; however, because the Chinese student is inherently shy, and feels ill at ease in the classroom, participation is the hardest thing for him.

"You should only speak when spoken to,
You should not question your elders.
You should respect your peers.
Sit properly, listen attentively, and don't fidget..."

No wonder Chinese students are always so quiet and well-behaved. No wonder they drive their teachers to exasperation.

Chinese children have been brought up to feel that too many facial expressions are improper. But in learning the English language, and in trying to make the foreign sounds, they have to engage in all kinds of facial contortions. Adolescents and adult students often find this most embarrassing in front of the class.

All in all, learning the English language is a very difficult task for Chinese students.

The absence of a sense of achievement

In a Chinese society foreigners are treated with great respect. A Westerner who makes his home in Hong Kong, for example, can live quite comfortably without ever trying to learn the Chinese language. Any attempt to say a few words in Chinese, however unsuccessful, will be greeted with deep admiration and wonder. He will be surrounded by an admiring throng, all nodding approval. In Toronto however, where many Chinese immigrants live, not only fluency in the English language is demanded of them but they will not really be accepted unless they speak with the right accent. And when this whole immense task of mastering the English language is achieved, the Chinese student would only have "caught up" with his Canadian counterparts. He has only fulfilled the basic requirement. There is no applause for him.

The encounter between the Canadian teacher and the Chinese student
in the classroom

In August, 1969 The Research Department of the Toronto Board of Education issued Report No. 81 entitled: Main St. School and Regional Reception Centres: a comparison of 'graduates'. Below are some excerpts from this report which may throw some light on the way some Chinese students see some of their Canadian teachers:

"Sometimes freedom doesn't really help."

"...The amount of 'freedom' in Canadian schools may be a bit of a shock ."

(P. 31)

"I think the teachers here, some of them, look down on the Chinese. From their conversation, I know. One of my teachers, I'm not going to mention his name, when he speaks he likes to joke about the Chinese and 'Hong Kong Specials'... when he makes these jokes all the other Canadian students look back at us, and it's, well, it's awful and it's not nice."

(P. 34)

The process of adaptation certainly is not easy. And what about the teachers?

Some Ogden Staff members have this to say:

"It is very helpful to have a teacher on the staff from a culture similar to that of the New Canadians... However, if cultural immersion is to take place pupils must learn to work with Canadian teachers."

"The Chinese children tend to be very reticent. They need a great deal of encouragement to express themselves. Some of this is due to a language problem, some is cultural."

"...It is very difficult to introduce new mathematical concepts - especially those involving relatively complex theory, such as fractions. They may complete the mechanical work satisfactorily, but I wonder how much real understanding they have of the process."

Certainly these Orientals are quite a bundle!

Even at the university level the same problem exists. The Chinese student invariably keeps quiet to the utter dismay of their professors. Is it because they don't understand what is going on? Is it because of their language problem? How they wish they knew what makes a Chinese tick! They do not realize that the Chinese student may be in a mild state of shock all the time!

The Chinese are a 'thinking' people, while it has been observed the Canadians are a very 'verbal' people. For the latter, the ability to talk well is the most reliable indicator of intelligence.

"Oh the way they talk! They even think aloud!"

For the Chinese, unfortunately, the opposite holds true. They have been brought up to think that 'empty vessels make the most noise!' and that a wise and knowledgeable man will not talk much. Right from infancy, children have been admonished to listen and pay attention to adult talk and thus to learn. Their opinions are not sought, but lessons about life, e.g., the importance of being kind, courteous and upright are pointed out to them in concrete situations. They are praised for being able to THINK right and well. Feelings are very important. They are constantly reminded to feel for the old and those who are smaller than they.

Great wisdom is disguised in folly.
(cf. Still waters run deep.)

大 志 若 愚

Think thrice before you act.

三 思 而 後 行

To seal up one's mouth three times.
(To be extremely cautious in speech.)

三 緘 其 口

Once you have spoken, even four
hours cannot overtake your words.

一 言 既 出
駟 馬 難 追

He who understands does not speak;
he who speaks does not understand.

知 者 不 言
言 者 不 知

The Chinese student is astonished not only by the way people talk in the classroom; he is shocked by the behaviour of the other students.

One lady in the room is knitting as the lecturer talks; another gentleman takes off his shoes and pops his legs up on the table while he leisurely takes notes; yet another starts to smoke. But it is during discussion time that the Chinese student becomes really stunned. (He dismisses the occasional interruptions from the students during the lecture as bad behaviour that all teachers have to put up with.)

"I think you are wrong." This, to the lecturer!

"I am afraid that you have completely missed the point."

This, to a fellow student and in front of the whole class!

Such behaviour would be unheard of in a typical learning situation among Chinese, be they university graduates, undergraduates, or secondary school students. For the smaller ones of course, it would be out of the question. Among Chinese people, learning is a very serious and formal affair. On the first day of school, a Chinese mother used to take the child to the temple to go through a ritual to mark the occasion. The traditional Chinese teacher (this is no longer done, but it shows the spirit behind Chinese learning) holds a book in one hand and a rod in the other.

Respect your teachers and revere learning. 尊師重道

Inside the school or university (even in the English university in Hong Kong) the teachers and professors enjoy maximum respect and esteem. Bowing to the teachers is considered the right thing to do when you say 'Good Morning' or 'Good-bye' and even university students will never interrupt a lecture. When there are queries and doubts, you usually ask your classmates to be sure that you have not misunderstood or left out something that the teacher or professor has said. If you are still baffled, you wait outside the classroom or the teacher's room and humbly ask for enlightenment. When you are very sure that the teacher or professor has made a mistake, you will make very sure that you do not mention it, not out of fear but out of respect and consideration for his feelings. The teachers and professors on the other hand always ask if there are any questions at the end of the lesson or lecture, and the students will generally make sure that they know what to ask, for though questions are encouraged, foolish or irrelevant questions are frowned at, which means that a student who

has day-dreamed or lagged behind will not dare ask a question. A lot of discussions go on and continue OUTSIDE the classroom where students can contradict each other and fight out a point. If, however, they did that during a class, it would be considered very brash.

How a Chinese student is received by his peer-group

* "The English people are friendly... The Chinese -Canadians are not friendly with the New Canadians. I don't know why, they just don't like us. I like better the Canadians than the Chinese-Canadians who were born here. They don't even speak to us. They say bad things to us in English."

"When we change classroom, there is always a crowd, you know, and I can't walk very fast and they (Canadian classmates) push me and say 'Ah, you stupid, move along faster... They say other things too only I don't know how to say them... They are not polite. They only say these things to the Chinese... I tried to join a camera club here in school, but I found that the others didn't like Chinese so I quit. If you ask them anything they act as if they didn't hear anything. So I left."

"Always try to speak English. Try to make friends with the Canadians because if you don't try they won't."

Youngsters can sometimes be quite unkind!

Cultural differences and conflicts:

One of the commonest expressions used by Canadians is "Can I help you?"

This is an expression of good-will and kindness. To the Chinese, however, it sounds quite presumptuous. A man looking up a friend will be greeted with:

"What can I learn from you?" (有什麼指教?)

And he will reply:

"Oh I dare not presume. I came to ..." (啊不敢當)

The above is a very common exchange.

* S. Mowat: Main Street School and Regional Reception Centres:-
A Comparison of "graduates"
Toronto, The Toronto Board of Education August /67
(P. 34-36)

Canadians always greet each other with "Hi!"

This is equivalent to the Chinese 喂 which would be considered very rude. Their form of greeting is much more formal, and unless they are very close friends indeed they cannot call people by name. Imagine their shock and disbelief when they are told that some Canadians even call their fathers by name! The names of the parents are held almost sacred by the Chinese. Their children's names are not supposed to use the same characters as theirs. This is taboo.

The Canadian way of calling their teachers by name is just as shocking to the Chinese.

Children are adored by the Chinese to a degree that Westerners find hard to understand. There is a Chinese saying:

母憑子貴

The mother is given glory because of her sons.

Once a baby is born, all the relatives are notified. On the twelfth day, red eggs and a special kind of soup are distributed to the relatives and when the first month is over, even a poor man will try (sometimes even by borrowing money) to give a feast to mark the occasion. There is no lack of love or attention for a Chinese child, especially if he is a boy. It is not unusual for a Chinese child to be spoon-fed even to the age of four. Against this background, the Canadian way of bringing up a child (stressing freedom and independence) is interpreted as parental negligence. Similarly the practice of leaving children to 'discover' things in the classroom is seldom acceptable to the Chinese parents.

Conflict in the Home

The wishes and needs of his family are tremendously important to the student, and of all Chinese traditions, loyalty to the family is perhaps the most deeply rooted. The Chinese student has been born and brought up within an extensive family network. His achievements and failures are shared by all the family; if he does something wrong, he would feel that he has shamed the whole family, and his parents might blame themselves for his disgrace. The student's life is strongly governed by feelings of respect and loyalty to his family.

(Chan, Hui 1974 P.5)

Given that the Chinese and Canadian cultures are quite different, and that the Chinese student must do well in school, the natural consequence would be that sooner or later the Chinese parents would discover that there is an ever widening gap between them and their children. For both the parents and the children, this is heart-breaking. To do well in Canadian society you must speak well and fluently with the right Canadian accent. Gradually the Chinese child loses his Chinese. Communication between the parents and children becomes very difficult. On July 4, 1970 the following article appeared in the Toronto Star:

Boy needs interpreter in own home

When Victor Chung, 19, wants to discuss a complex matter with his parents, he needs an interpreter, because they understand hardly any English and his Chinese is inadequate.

Victor is a full-blown Canadian, an active extrovert who loves folk singing, movies, hamburgers, long hair and Canadian girls.

His parents, though (he admits) progressive by Toronto Chinese community standards, still cling to many of the ways of their old country.

He's frankly a little cross with them for not having learned English after all these years. They've tried, but partly because it's a difficult language to learn and partly because they haven't really needed it, they've never got very far.

He, in turn has lost much of his Chinese and it's now definitely a second language.

The Chinese student seems to live in two conflicting worlds, and it is demanded of him that he not only solve his personal dilemma, but that he be a good scholar as well. To do this, he must somehow master the English language as soon as possible despite formidable difficulties, be accepted as one of his peer-group, work tremendously hard at his studies, and behave in a completely different way when he returns home. He must somehow 'learn from the West' and 'succeed in the West', but always 'remember not to be like them' at least not at home.

And there are many Chinese students who have somehow managed to achieve this.

It is a well-known fact that almost one-third of the medical students at the University of Toronto are Chinese, to the resentment of many Canadians:

* The NDP member for High Park said: "The marks-only system discriminates against our sons and daughters " and he called for a renewal of a quota-system - this one to limit foreign-born students to 10%.

Why do foreign-born students excel ?

"They don't socialize, " he told the Legislature, "They don't go out with girls. They don't play sports. They don't do anything but work."

This he warned, could lead to a complete takeover by non-citizens. His speech won support from some Government and Liberal members.

The article set out to defend the Chinese against these unjust accusations, but it does serve to show that many Chinese students have managed not to disappoint their families.

Why the obsession to do well academically?

Undoubtedly, Confucius is the greatest single factor that has helped to make Chinese culture what it is. And what did Confucius preach?

Confucius was a humanist; he believed that one should love mankind...one demonstrates love of mankind through love and respect for one's family and that a love for mankind which does not include love for one's family is likely to be a distorted form of love. Thus he sanctioned the already existing ancestor worship and encouraged filial piety.

(A. Witzel: 1969, p. 13)

* A. Bruner, Bad old days are still too close for Toronto's 50,000 Chinese - Globe and Mail August 2, 1974.

Confucius believed in the essential goodness of man; and he taught that man could realize his potential for goodness through knowledge, thus laying the foundation for the Chinese respect for the scholar.

(A. Witzel: 1969 P.12)

Confucianism became not just the social and political philosophy of life but the literary heritage of the Chinese people. The civil service examinations instituted before Christ and not abolished until the twentieth century were based on Confucian and neo-Confucian canons, poetry, etc. A man was not considered educated unless he passed these examinations. Success in the examinations was the pre-requisite for employment in the government either nationally or provincially.

(A. Witzel: 1969 P.13)

As far as the Chinese can remember learning was synonymous with prestige and honour:

書本自有黃金屋 書本自有顏如玉

Hidden in the books are a house of gold and a goddess-like bride.

And their experience in Hong Kong only tends to reinforce this concept:

In Hong Kong, a student has to fight every inch of the way for his place in school. (The two universities in Hong Kong are at the top of the educational pyramid with approximately five candidates striving for each place.)

(Chan, Hui 1974 P.4)

The Chinese student is well acquainted with hard work. After all many of their parents are refugees from China who have left everything behind and have to start again from scratch. With the population explosion and employment problems, life is hard and pleasures are few. Some seventy per cent of Hong Kong students wear spectacles, and this can't all be due to heredity. Chinese families are usually big and when father's income is small, and fees have to be paid, students must work tremendously hard to get scholarships. There is no time for hockey or long trips. Life is hard, and hard work is part of life. And work for the students means studies.

Parent involvement in school

Even in Hong Kong, which is a familiar setting, Chinese parents seldom attend school functions. If the school asks to see them, it means their children have got into trouble, and the problem will have been solved even before the parents set out for school. The interview with the teacher would only be for the parents to apologize for their negligence and to promise that their child won't create any more trouble. On the whole such meetings are seldom necessary. Discipline is rarely a problem with Chinese children. They know their place in the family and their duties and their life-goals are well-defined. On Speech Days when prizes are awarded most parents will go to attend; otherwise there is seldom any need for the encounter between the school and the parents.

It is easy to see that in a foreign setting, with the language and cultural barrier, Chinese parents would not participate in school functions. So the Chinese student and the Canadian teacher must make it on their own, which sometimes means that the Chinese student alone must handle his problems and difficulties, because he may feel that he can't confide his problems to a foreign teacher whose language he hasn't yet mastered and whose ways are so different from those of his Chinese teachers.

He does learn after all

With all the problems and conflicts discussed above, one may well wonder how a Chinese student learns the English language at all. The fact remains that Chinese students do learn the language fairly quickly, and do not tend to speak with such a marked accent as some other ethnic groups. How? Why?

I believe that the most important point is that 99% of all the Chinese immigrants have come to Toronto or other parts of Canada with a good orientation to learn English, so that the negative effects of culture shock or cultural conflicts are counteracted.

Almost all Chinese immigrants coming to Toronto were born and brought up in Hong Kong. Only a few have come from Taiwan and other territories such as the Philippines or Singapore, and very few have experienced life under the Communist regime.

(Chan, Hui: 1974 P.2)

Now Hong Kong is a British Colony, and employment **DEPENDS** on at least a good working knowledge of English. Referring again to the article by Gardner (1966) pointing out that motivation plays a very important part in the acquisition of a second language, and that this motivation depends on the attitude of the parents towards the other language group, I will attempt to show that in Hong Kong all these factors are favourable to the Chinese students.

Westerners in Hong Kong, whether they be British officers, tourists, or missionaries have, on the whole, made a good impression on the Chinese. They are people who have been motivated to go to live in this predominantly Chinese community, and they seem to appreciate the ways of the Chinese. So the point of motivation is no problem. Then, the students are taught by Chinese teachers against a Chinese cultural background. All the problems arising from pressure from peer-group, pressure from home, and foreign learning material do not exist. Instead of John and Mary, the textbooks portray Ah Ming and Ah Lan. The pictures show Chinese children, Chinese houses, etc. When these students go to Canada, though the English language becomes a second language rather than a foreign one, and they are surrounded by English speakers, they have actually entered a less favourable learning environment. However the right motivation still remains, and because they are surrounded by native speakers, it's easier for them to pick up the right intonation and accent, which have hitherto been their problems. There are other factors too.

In learning English pronunciation, Chinese students may actually have one advantage over students whose native languages use alphabetic systems of writing. German, Spanish, or French students may obstinately stick to the same symbols in English. Since Chinese students usually have never had any previous experience with the alphabetic principle, they do not have a preconceived idea as to how a word should be pronounced, and thus are more ready to accept English pronunciation as it is.

(Tang Wang, Earle, 1972, p. 666)

Chinese students are fond of reading aloud. Since their language has different tones and other characteristics that make it musical, they have developed a keen ear for pleasing rhymes and meters. This fortuitous cultural fact suggests that poetry reading, as well as other expressive reading, such as plays and stories, can be introduced at an early stage of learning.

(Tang Wang, Earle, 1972, p. 667)

The very character of Chinese calligraphy makes it ideal as an operationally effective medium for developing reading competence in the young! There is a strong, if somewhat young, argument now growing in the literature on the mental processes which result in reading competence. The argument indicates that the very young achieve that competence if what they are reading is coded in the dicto-graph forms used in Chinese writing. What the argument points out is that overall activity of Chinese reading, and writing, is inherently a sound learning process to which the young learner spontaneously relates with ease, enthusiasm and a maximum potential for achievement. It may well be, though it is yet too early to state with certainty, that buried in the very nature of Chinese writing there exists the potential for young people to learn the intricate skill of reading and writing English words and letters through the process of learning to write Chinese first!

(Draft report of the Work Group on
Multicultural Programs, 1975, p.63)

Though the point has been brought out that Chinese parents impress it on their children very strongly that they should always remember that they are Chinese, their children are also constantly reminded to be courteous, respectful and never to offend in their new environment:

入國問禁入鄉問俗入門問諱

On entering a country, inquire what is forbidden; on entering a village, inquire what are the customs; on entering a private house, ask what should not be mentioned.

While the Chinese usually retain their own ways of living and their sons, if necessary, will return to Hong Kong to look for a Chinese bride, they always manage to live harmoniously with the native people.

So they do learn after all!

Prejudice against the Chinese student

On the whole, the Chinese people in Toronto have not been given a fair deal. Their oriental looks are a constant reminder to people that they have come from the antipodes, and human nature is such that prejudice and discrimination operate most actively in such circumstances.

"Ever since there has been an identifiable Chinese community in Toronto, that community has been under siege from the pressures of white dominance, unjust immigration and redevelopment downtown."

(Pennington: 1976)

Because of their hard work Chinese students have gained good access to the medical faculty of the University of Toronto. BUT,

"They don't socialize," said the NDP member for High Park
"They...don't do anything but work."

Never before has hard work been a cause of complaint against a student. Unable to find any legitimate reason for attacking the Chinese medical students, their antagonists usually use the language factor, most of the time without good cause. The medical professors complained to the Admission Board that the many Chinese medical students in their department cannot really cope with the language. The Admission Board, rather harassed, asked for the names of these Chinese students. They were given twelve. After checking up the students' files, they discovered that seven of those twelve students were born and brought up in Canada!

But except in very unbearable circumstances (such as the Henry Fong case - a medical student who was thrown out after the fourth year of medicine - the first time in the history of the medical department of the University of Toronto) the Chinese never make a scene.

Periods of great hardship have also built up in the Chinese character an ability to accept the inevitable.

(Kuo: 1965)

Perhaps they always bear in mind the saying that:

吃得苦中苦方為人上人

He who can bear the greatest sufferings shall excel others.

Conclusion:

So the Chinese student emerges as being potentially a very good English language learner. What can be done to help him realize his potentials? Various experts and various articles have offered suggestions, but the most worthy of attention may be those recommendations drawn up by the Chinese Parents Association of Orde St. and Ogden Schools.

- * 1. Special classes should be offered to New Canadian students who have problems in adjusting to the Canadian school system.
- 2. A reception program to explain the system both to the parents and students should be started.
- 3. A Chinese-Canadian Bilingual/Bicultural program should become a permanent part of the school curriculum and the Board of Education should gradually play a more active role in promoting this cultural program.
- 4. The Toronto Board of Education should employ a bilingual community liaison worker and place that person in the community. This will definitely promote the parents' interest and involvement in school affairs since they then know what is going on.

...There should be more Chinese teachers in schools where there are many Chinese students.

The School Board should hire more Chinese social workers. The Chinese community should make available a speaker knowledgeable in the particular problems and characteristics of Chinese students and parents. The speaker could then give regular talks to the staffs of various schools.

(Chan, Hui 1974 P. 21)

The research data suggest that the students who are recent arrivals, especially those who already had started school in their mother land are those whose problems seem the greatest. The teen-age immigrant should have a flexible program. His previous work in such areas as mathematics and science should be reviewed and integrated in terms of the Ontario curriculum while he is learning English. The possibility of providing some instruction in his mother tongue should be explored.

(Research Dept. No. 59)

(Wright. 1970 P.6)

When he loses the feelings of inferiority which ignorant teachers all too consciously foster by ignoring his background, he can then accept himself and see himself not as a member of a particular race or cultural group, but as a unique individual with something special to offer to the world around him. The Western world then, does not represent the adult world, nor does his original culture represent the childlike, primitive world. Each society has its own unique set of values and traditions and he can choose the desirable elements from both cultures. Then he is not faced with the dilemma.

(Salisbury 1968)

- * Proposal for the Multi-cultural program. Toronto Board of Education Library 1974

Personally, I strongly support the proposal that there should be an ethnic representation on the school staff. This acts in several ways:

1. The fact that there are Chinese on the teaching staff will give the Chinese students a sense of security and offset any feelings of fear and strangeness.
2. Their Canadian friends will have a better appreciation of the Chinese and will find it easier to accept them.
3. The Chinese students can see for themselves the possibility of integration with the Canadians by seeing the interaction between the Chinese teachers and the Canadian ones.
4. Language learning will be much facilitated, because they are taught by teachers who can truly understand their background and their peculiar difficulties.
5. They will not suffer from the crippling sense of inferiority because they can identify with their Chinese teacher.
6. The Chinese parents will feel much happier about attending school functions.

I believe that the other proposals mentioned in the conclusion are important too. Lastly I would agree that for all the teachers concerned sensitivity is so important:

Perhaps the critical attribute of the teacher is a fair understanding of important differences between Chinese and English in terms of spoken and written language, educational philosophy, instructional methods and other aspects of the two cultures.

(Tang Wang Earle: 1972 p.667)

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THE ELDERLY CHINESE

by Dr. F. Liu

April 3, 1975

What I am going to present to you is common knowledge and familiar to most of you. It is mainly from my own observation over the years. Brief outline will be presented and more discussion can be brought forward during the Workshop discussion period.

In order to understand why the proportion of elderly Chinese is much higher than that in the general population, we have to go back into history. Suffice it to say that during the turn of the century Canada adopted a policy to exclude Orientals from immigrating to Canada. For example, the head tax was raised to \$500 from \$50 per person just before the First World War. At that time \$500 was a lot of money, equivalent to perhaps \$5000 by today's standard. Many Chinese borrowed money to come and had to work hard for many years to pay it back. Most of them therefore could not afford to send for their families in China to join them. Furthermore, their intention was not to stay permanently in Canada but to return to their homeland, hopefully, with a bag of gold. In 1923, Parliament enacted the Chinese Immigration Act. That stopped practically all immigration of Chinese until the repeal of this Act in 1947. Many fortunate ones were then able to send for their wives and children. However, due to the aftermath of World War II and the subsequent political situation in China, many who intended to return to China were forced to stay in Canada alone by themselves. This is why we have so many single elderly males in the Chinese community today.

With the change of immigration policy in 1967, many more Chinese came as landed immigrants. As a rule they bring their parents with them or send for them soon afterwards. This adds to the rank of the elderly population.

We do not have any accurate figure of the Chinese population in Metro, let alone the number of the elderly. Judging from the membership of the Chinese Golden Age Association and the Woodgreen Association, the number is substantial. Arbitrarily, I would divide them into three groups:-

- 1) those who came before 1923 -- pioneers
- 2) those who came after 1947 -- immediate families and students
- 3) those who came after 1967 -- landed immigrants of new families, many without family ties in Canada.

The third group came mainly from Hong Kong and the number has gradually increased over the years. In 1973 the total Chinese immigration to Canada was just under 15,000. Quite different from the previous immigrants, this group contains many highly educated and professional people. They have a good command of the English language and they have the education and knowledge to earn a living and therefore they can establish themselves quickly. Many among them are well-to-do and they come to Canada for peaceful existence.

When I first started to practise medicine in Toronto my office was located outside Chinatown, for there was adequate medical coverage in Chinatown. Then about ten years ago, I was invited by a few elders of Chinatown to set up an office in Chinatown mainly to help care for the elderly. I felt that I was obligated to do so and have maintained a separate office in Chinatown ever since. At the beginning I used to perform many non-medical duties as well, e.g., filling in various documents and some translations. We have established a good relationship. They are honest people. I never had to keep track of their payments for services. In those days there was no medical insurance. They would come and pay when they had the money. I remember one man who came back five years later to pay for my services to him. You would like to devote yourself to doing something for them.

The problems we are going to discuss are not unique to the Chinese but they are more exaggerated in that community. We are going to talk about them at random and not in any order of importance. They are:

- 1) Shelter - housing
- 2) Communication
- 3) Dietary -- different types of food
different ways of preparation
likes and dislikes
- 4) Family relationships -- Children's achievements
Marriage
Chinese festivals
- 5) Government agencies and assistance-- Old age assistance with
guaranteed supplements
Welfare payments
Drug benefit plan, etc.

Shelter is a big problem, particularly among the single males. They are often untidy and unkempt. They are very independent and insist on living their own style of life. Usually they present no trouble or problem, except when they are ill. Oftentimes there is no immediate family member to look after them or to do some chores for them. The landlord naturally does not wish to have a sick person in his household. And usually he is not seriously ill enough to enter hospital. This is a dilemma.

It is only in the last few years that we have Chinese residents in the homes for the aged in any appreciable number. I still remember the day when we welcomed the first Chinese woman to Lambert Lodge. Everyone was geared for that occasion. On that day the administrator of the home was there, the nursing director was there, and I was there to receive her. She turned out to be a healthy 65-year old lady who did not get along with her daughter-in-law. She is still staying at Lambert Lodge and is quite happy there. She helps other Chinese newcomers to adjust to the new environment at the home. She does not speak a word of English. She is active in arts and crafts. We have to give her a lot of credit for adjusting so well in the new environment.

I am happy to say that many couples are enjoying their small and tidy apartments in the senior citizen housing projects. The main objection is that many of the housing projects are too far away from the downtown area. They prefer the core area where they know the district well and where they can walk to shopping, recreation facilities and social gatherings.

This brings out one of the special features of the Mon Sheong home for the aged. The home is located on Darcy St., just one block north of the Art Gallery of Ontario. It is right in the heart of the residential district of the Chinese community and close to many community activities and facilities.

Although the large family with three generations living under the same roof is not as common as it used to be, we still have more parents and grandparents living with their children and grandchildren than any other group that I know of. When we live with our elderly, particularly when we are young, we are inclined to accept them more readily and to show more respect to them. This is one of the Chinese ways of life that we should cherish and preserve.

There are husbands and wives living in separate countries, one in the U.S.A. and the other in Canada. They often compare the benefits that they are entitled to and many prefer to remain in Canada instead. They go back and forth visiting each other and their children. One of my patients goes to the States and stays there for three months. He returns to Toronto just to visit the doctor and to get a supply of free medicine.

Summing up then, the elderly Chinese are not particularly concerned about the physical appearance of the building or the apartment, but rather the availability of housing, the convenience of location and the acceptance of their presence.

We now turn to another subject. Chinese is a unique language. It has no phonetic alphabet and it does not have some of the sounds found in English, particularly the consonants, e.g. "R" or "S" sounds.

It has been observed again and again that as we grow older we tend to use more and more the first language we learned and know best. This is particularly evident after a stroke or some other brain disturbance. In a tight situation, when someone swears at you, he often resorts to the use of the first language he knows best.

Another problem is the different Chinese dialects. We sometimes may not be able to communicate orally among ourselves if we speak different dialects. A well-known example is: a Cantonese student and a Shanghai student studying at the same university in the States have to communicate in English because they do not understand each other's dialect.

Many of the older Chinese do not know enough English to tell you about themselves. Medically at times it is nearly impossible to obtain a good and pertinent history from them. They may use terms of description which have meaning in Chinese but which cannot be translated into English. They therefore have difficulty in relating their problems to health care personnel. They seek help from the Chinese doctors for the sake of easier communication. At the Mon Sheong Home for the aged the staff will be bilingual so that there will be a two-way communication.

One of the most happy and inspiring events in the old man's or old lady's life is to see his or her children and grandchildren entering universities and getting their degrees. They try their best to influence the next generation to improve themselves and to climb out of the cocoon into the big world. Through their children they fulfill their own dreams and wishes. When my wife got her first degree from McMaster University, there was great joy and celebration in the family. Since ancient times, the Chinese have always accorded special respect and privilege to the scholars. The children are encouraged and expected to study diligently and to perform good work in school. Their academic standings and their numbers in the universities today certainly testify to the emphasis given to education by the Chinese.

Paradoxically, on one hand, they would like to see their children getting into the big wide world and on the other hand, they are concerned about gradual erosion of the traditional respect and authority they have enjoyed. The younger generation is more Canadianized. The older generation is worried that they may lose all the Chinese culture and customs. This is an environmental factor that we as a minority in a greater society cannot avoid or dictate. There is no doubt that we have to learn, to adopt and to mould ourselves but at the same time to preserve as much as possible the good portion of the ancient culture. We should have the best of the two cultures. I think we are lucky in this respect. This is why the Mon Sheong Foundation has established Chinese schools for children. We teach not only the Chinese language, but also our culture and philosophy.

The other happily celebrated affair is the wedding in the family. The old Chinese say -- to have a family and to establish a business or profession--is most appropriate. This is usually a big family affair. Often the parents and grandparents play a major role. Pre-arranged marriage is nearly non-existent now, but the older generation still try to have a hand in it.

There are two subjects elderly Chinese often choose to avoid and not to discuss at all. They do not like to make a will and they do not like to go to hospital. It is often considered to be near the end of one's life in this world if one has to enter hospital. To make a will is not a good omen and they are afraid to do so. In Chinese tradition, it has always been the oldest son who gets the bulk of the inheritance and there is no argument about it. Also they almost always honour the wishes of the dying man at the bedside without any written document. Of course things are different in Canada and government has much to say as well.

Being transplanted from one culture to another without any knowledge or preparation to adopt the new culture is not an easy task. Many of the older Chinese have considered themselves as being blind since they cannot read English; as being deaf because they do not understand when spoken to; and as being mute for they cannot speak the language. How do you survive and adjust in such a strange society? That many of them have survived and many have prospered, even though they are handicapped by all counts, is a small wonder and a great credit to the Chinese-Canadians.

The Chinese senior citizens are not that much different from those of other ethnic groups. We have our own culture. We have our own language. But just like the others we wish to communicate with you and we want to become an integral part of the Great Canadian Society.

Presented at the Intercultural Seminar, 3 April, 1975, at the University Settlement House, Toronto, Ontario.

EDUCATION IN HONG KONG AND ADAPTATION OF CHINESE CHILDREN IN CANADA

by Pauline Tsui

The schools in Hong Kong reflect the over-populated and competitive characteristics of this British Colony. In Toronto, teacher qualifications are more or less the same, no matter whether it is in North Toronto or the inner city. This is not the case in Hong Kong. There are mainly three kinds of schools in Hong Kong: (1) government schools, (2) government-subsidized schools, which are mostly church-sponsored, and (3) private schools, many of which are run for profit. Generally speaking, the first two types of schools have the best qualified teachers, while the private schools vary greatly. Because of the varying standards most parents try to send their children to the best school their children can get into rather than the one closest to home.

Elementary education in Hong Kong takes six years, and secondary education five (Form I to V). If a student intends to go to university, he takes two more years of matriculation courses (Form VI, Upper and Lower). English is usually taught from Grade I on and is considered a very important subject. At the secondary school level, there are two streams. One is called the Anglo-Chinese stream in which English is used as the medium of instruction while Chinese remains as an important subject. The other is called the Vernacular stream, with Chinese as the medium of instruction and English as a very important subject. It is important for teachers here to know that Chinese children come from schools with varying standards as well as the two different streams at the secondary school level.

In order to help the children to get through the Grade I entrance examination into a relatively good school, most parents send their children to the two-year kindergartens, which are privately run. As far as government schools are concerned, the six-year elementary education is free but not compulsory. At the end of the sixth grade, the government gives an examination, selects the more successful students and places them in the government or government-subsidized secondary schools. The rest of the students have to find their own way into private schools, again through competitive examinations. At the end of Form V, the government gives a school-leaving examination. The majority will pass but only the most successful ones can get into the matriculation courses and later sit for the University Entrance Examination. Pressure to achieve is placed on a child from a very early age. Academic achievement is over-emphasized to the expense of physical, emotional and social development of the child. The teacher-training colleges preach child-centred education, but the schools have to be very realistic. Also, obviously, opportunities go to the better endowed and the more privileged children.

When the Chinese children come over here, they usually like school. They are relieved of the fierce competition. The parents are appreciative of the educational opportunities for their children. The teachers here also like Chinese children because generally they are well-behaved and conscientious. If the children come here young, there is plenty of time to drill the language and basic skills and to develop the child's personality and social relationships. Few of the younger children become a concern to the teachers. If a few of them do, it is often one of two problems, or both: (1) the child is too quiet or even withdrawn and (2) the child makes slow progress in English. There are of course cultural factors, besides personal ones, causing this. The Chinese parents emphasize character development and harmony in social relationships. They want their children to be honest, conscientious, obedient and respectful. Quietness is accepted, if not encouraged. Generally speaking, Chinese parents are not as verbal as Canadians. They do not usually attempt to draw their children out the way Canadian parents do. A withdrawing tendency on the part of the child is seldom recognized as a problem. On the other hand, the Canadian school wants the children to be responsive and involved, to make friends and to be able to participate in a group. When we get a withdrawn child early, there is a lot we can do. In the school, we can place such a child with a compatible teacher, give him small-group experience and provide additional help to build up confidence. Parents need help to see the difference in culture and hence in goals and expectations. Parents also need reassurance that play and fun are good for their children. Recreational programs in the community can also be of much help.

Problems among the Chinese students who come here at the high school level are harder to overcome. If a student is reasonably bright and has had a fair educational opportunity in Hong Kong, he can overcome the language difficulty and make other necessary adaptations. The standard in mathematics and in science subjects is generally higher in Hong Kong. Therefore, many Chinese students tend to do brilliantly in these subjects, but those who had a lesser opportunity in Hong Kong find the obstacles are much harder to overcome. Very often these young people have the ambition but not the academic foundation. They sometimes are not realistic enough to accept the program and grade placement recommended by the school and its auxiliary services. They insist on aiming high and fail at the end; the high schools are not yet able to give adequate help to this type of student.

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965-4331

CHINESE FAMILY LIFE

A talk presented by Miss Eleanor Mui

At the Chinese Intercultural Seminar

held at WoodGreen Community Centre

January 29, 1974

The family ties among the Chinese used to be closely knit together. We have long been accustomed to a large family pattern. When I say large this might be considered as enormous by North American standards, because a Chinese family in the old days included not only the immediate members of the family unit, but those of the third and fourth generations as well, all living under the same roof. This is what most Chinese want and are proud to call a family. The eldest male member of a family is usually the head of the household and also the breadwinner. The status of the female is considered as minor, her only role limited to being a good wife and mother. Within a big family the elders are held in high respect. They are looked up to as the figures of authority, playing a dominating role. Being the seniors they are well honoured and their word is meant to be accepted as the golden rule by the whole family.

In the past ten years, there have been many social and cultural changes brought about by various influential factors, yet still many Chinese prefer to stick to the traditional pattern of living. This particularly relates to the older generation -- age 40 and above. As we can imagine this will create a problem, but the contrast is more obvious when it happens to the immigrant families here. Within this category quite a

number of parents still think and act as they are accustomed to, and what's more, they expect their children to behave and act more or less in the same manner. Somehow, most of them, seeing the way their children are growing up, are bound to be disappointed, as their concept of living and that of their children is totally different. When I talk of the youngsters I intend to separate them into two groups - those that come with their parents in their teens and those that are born here.

The first group, who lived and were educated in their own motherland and then emigrated to Canada in their teens, tend to switch to the western way of living and thinking, but still maintain a certain level of the Chinese concept of moral principles. These youngsters are likely to have fewer conflicts with their parents, since they already know something of the Chinese cultural background. To the second group, the Canadian-born Chinese, we give a unique term "Banana" which plainly means their skin is yellow but right down inside they are white. Most of them classify themselves as Canadians rather than Chinese, because aside from their appearance they are no different from Canadians in the sense of style of living and concept of thinking.

For instance, they prefer Canadian food; they live according to western norms; they demand freedom yet many seem indulgent in many aspects; they are less affectionate and obedient towards their folks. This kind of life and behaviour is hard for their conservative parents to accept.

Adding to the difficult situation is the language barrier between the two generations, as unfortunately, quite a number of parents within this category do not speak English and the children do not know Chinese. Though some speak it at home, the result is not very satisfactory, and this creates a communication gap. A most common phenomenon in these families is that the parents speak in Chinese and the children answer in English, or both parties try to communicate in both broken English and Chinese to express themselves as best they can. Yet it is apparent that some degree of misunderstanding will be in existence. This will widen the gap between the generations.

Somehow such conditions make it more difficult for the elders in the family, especially those who have parted with their folks years ago and came with the least idea of western culture. Also, they are the central figure of a three-generation family, with the youngest generation constantly pressing for freedom of action and being baffled by splitting of authority among the elders. The oldest generation faces problem of status loss, and

the middle generation is caught between the two. Such interaction between family members only complicates things more. For the elders like things to be as in the good old days, yet it is so much different that they are shocked by the changes and developments. They are forced to accept reality but with high frustration and disappointment. Many feel that they are being ignored and unwanted, as they no longer occupy an important role in the family. This hurts their dignity and brings forth the feeling of loneliness and uselessness.

Another group I would like to mention here are those who originally came as students. After graduation they found Canada had a more promising future for them, so they stayed for good and raised their family here. Their background with a mixed knowledge, training and experience of both eastern and western values, enables them to cope with their environment more easily. There tend to be fewer conflicts between them and their parents as they have a better understanding of the thinking of the seniors. Most of these students are quite Canadianized in dealing with their children, since they realize sooner or later their children will tend to be more westernized rather than pursue the Chinese style of living. After all, when they decided to settle down here, they intended to accept the changes already.

However, as time passes traditional Chinese customs will gradually vanish and partly become intermingled with western norms. Some changes within the Chinese family concept are becoming obvious, such as the smaller size of the family. Instead of raising whole bunches of children, many have come to realize the importance of quality rather than quantity. Secondly, most prefer a nuclear family unit which excludes the in-laws. Such trends are regarded as a thoughtless deed by the elders, but some of them have come to realize and accept the fact that they should have less involvement with their children's family life and should leave them on their own. I remember one occasion which is a good example to strengthen my statement. When the news about building a hostel for the aged was mentioned a year ago, many elders expressed great interest in this project, which shows that they more or less accept not having to depend totally on their children. Thirdly, many mothers instead of being plain housewives are out in society working in a vast variety of fields, sharing the responsibility with their husbands in supporting the family. Last but not the least, the youngsters are more independent; they prefer to stand on their own two feet as soon as they are capable and can manage to do so.

As to the social life of the Chinese, most tend to associate with people of their own ethnic group, except the youngsters. The groups organized for the senior citizens which offer entertainment and educational events for them, are much favoured by the elders, because it allows them to meet friends and to have something else to do to help pass the time. The middle-aged parents are so devoted to making a living or caring for the family, that their social life is fairly quiet. The most common entertainment for them is dining out or going to movies with the family, during their day off. Some may like to engage with friends in a game of "Mah-jong"--a very popular game among Chinese. The younger generation is more active. It is very easy for them to pick up what is interesting and available to them. Besides, it is easier for them to make friends. Also many churches, community centres and student organizations have set up many facilities and activities to suit their needs. So unless they choose to isolate themselves they can otherwise enjoy a more fascinating social life than any other age group.

CHINESE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

by Wesley Lore

History

The history of Chinese in Canada isn't a happy one. The Chinese, as you well know, came over in the beginning by the hundreds as cheap labour to build the railroads out west. They planned to work hard, earn a fortune and return rich to China. Unfortunately most didn't return because fortunes were not to be made, there were only promises of fortunes, and these promises continued to draw Chinese to Canada.

Soon there were a great many Chinese on the west coast. Many had taken trades and had gone into business in competition with the non-Chinese population. This threat of too many Chinese, and the private sector's fear of the Chinese dominating the commercial markets prompted the government to establish a Royal Commission. In 1886 the report culminated in a "head tax" of \$50 to be imposed on each Chinese entering Canada. Also the numbers were limited to one Chinese per 50 tons of cargo imported. This restriction did not prove to be effective and by 1900 the population of Chinese approached 20,000. The head tax was increased to \$100 in 1901 and to \$500 in 1904. At \$500 the head tax was effective (you could appreciate the true value of \$500 in those days).

At that time, to compound the trouble, Chinese became very efficient in the trades and in commerce. This was seen as a threat by the non-Chinese private sector. Race riots broke out, beginning in California and spreading to Vancouver. Injury and complete destruction of businesses and private property of the Chinese resulted. Some local governments

instituted laws prohibiting Chinese from working at or owning trades and businesses in direct competition with the non-Chinese private sector. So the Chinese were forced to take on menial work running laundries and restaurants.

However these riots had a useful result. They united a sector of the Chinese community to form an association which appealed to Ottawa for compensation for the damages incurred in the riots. They received \$100,000 but no changes in the laws.

This united action was the first real step towards any association to achieve political and social change which would better Chinese community life.

Although the head tax proved effective in decreasing immigration, Chinese were still entering Canada. The government enacted a series of laws to prohibit immigration into Canada. The first was the Labour Exclusion Act of the early 1900's which made it mandatory for all Chinese immigrants to enter only as students.

Then in 1923 a bill was introduced limiting Chinese immigration into Canada to students and merchants. Later this law was revised to forbid ALL Chinese from entering Canada. In fact, from 1924-47, no Chinese were admitted into Canada. Also, if for any reason one left Canada for more than a year he was not permitted to return. This was the only law ever enacted by a Canadian government to prohibit any race from entering. Such a political and social climate could not help but create a type of Chinese community very different from any other ethnic community you may know.

The Chinese community of Canada was largely composed of men since families and wives were not permitted to immigrate. This resulted in an insular community based on distrust of a government wholly prejudiced against it and a social environment totally opposed to any improvement of the attitude toward Chinese.

The Chinese as you well know have traditionally held a deep respect for authority, thus they seldom questioned the actions of government, even unjust ones. Associations created to change political and social attitudes did not exist. Tongs (secret or fraternal societies), family and village associations, however, did exist, but they were founded largely for socializing reasons.

However, by 1947 the government took a more liberal attitude. Chinese were given citizenship and the right to vote. Wives and families (children under 18) were allowed to enter. Still many restrictions and unnecessary hardships existed in the immigration laws.

Because of this unfairness, Chinese Benevolent Associations sprang up. They became more vocal after 1947 because they were now accepted in the Canadian mainstream. They were probably the first real associations formed to achieve some smattering of political and social change. Equally important, they were instrumental in letting the non-Chinese population see more of what the Chinese community was. Family associations tended to be very insular whereas the benevolent societies and associations with their political and social activity, although limited, brought the Chinese way of life to the Canadian public. They petitioned to Ottawa for more relaxed standards in the immigration laws and, after a time asked for equal treatment.

In the late forties children were being educated, enrolling in universities and also entering the business and commercial mainstream. Chinese began to be more aware of their situation. They began to realize that changes could be brought about fairly quickly by social and political action which they themselves could institute.

So you see, historically the Chinese were taken advantage of. Their respect for authority combined with authority's prejudices effectively curtailed any real development of associations geared to social betterment.

The Change

As the Chinese population itself became more accepted, it became more aware and began to institute changes. Associations didn't really change Canadian society's perspectives. A RATHER WEAK BEGINNING BUT A BEGINNING NEVERTHELESS! Now associations are forming, pushing for human rights, equal opportunities, betterment of social institutions that can serve or already serve the Chinese community, such as better housing, old age homes, welfare and health services, and funding to aid in the preservation of culture.

Parent associations are actively seeking changes within the school system - something unheard of in the past. They want public schools, particularly the core area schools with high percentages of Chinese children, to teach the Chinese language as a second language.

Community Organization

Perhaps we should now turn our attention to more specific development of Chinese associations. I can easily illustrate this development and the reasons for it by tracing the Chinese community's growth in Toronto.

As you probably know, Chinatown and the residential community are located in and around the core of downtown Toronto. The main business section of stores and restaurants runs from Elizabeth Street to the Spadina-Dundas-College area. The residents, now approaching 25,000 in Toronto, are concentrated in this same area and to the east in the Don Vale-Broadview-Pape district. However the Chinese community was not always situated there. It started in the Sherbourne-Queen location, moving to the York-Queen district and in the late 1940's, and in the 1950's reached its greatest commercial and residential concentration in the Queen-Elizabeth-Dundas area.

Expanding industry and commerce has always forced the Chinese community to move. In the mid 1950's, the greatest blow to the downtown Chinese community came with the building of the civic centre and the expansion of the court house. Then, as in the era prior to 1950, the Chinese community accepted the move even though it received at times shoddy treatment from the civic government. Eviction notices were delivered with only a short time left to move. Prices offered were unquestionably low.

Now outlooks have changed and community associations are fighting back to preserve what is rightfully theirs. Young families are being raised, and, because the social climate is improving, communities are becoming more open and interlocked. Although this process is good in many respects, it is beginning to threaten the Chinese cultural identity.

This threat has caused many younger parents and youths to start associations and groups to try to preserve their heritage. They are seeing their culture not as something to be cherished because it is traditional, but rather as something to be cherished and maintained because some of its outlooks and teachings are far better than many of the outlooks and teachings of the non-Chinese community. A RATHER PRACTICAL ATTITUDE.

The younger people are now better educated, (AND THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT FACT). This allows them to reach an economic level where they have enough time to evaluate the direction of their lives and establish their own priorities.

When these priorities are threatened they now have the time and money to defend them. For example, The Chinese Canadian Association was founded in the early fifties because of fear that the Korean War, with Chinese mainland participation, might cause the government to establish the internment camps such as those used to imprison the Japanese Canadians during World War II. To me the Association represents the new attitude of Chinese in Canada. Associations like this are beginning to get involved actively in the political sphere to try to change the laws and systems that do not function properly for the Chinese community.

This new attitude has seen the growth of Chinese parents' associations to ask for changes in the school system. It has seen the creation of an old age home by the Mon Sheong Foundation through private funds and government financing.

So as you see, the role of the associations has changed. They are actively instituting change rather than hoping for it.

THE DEMAND FOR CHANGE NOW EXISTS, NOT JUST THE CLIMATE.

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